London. Livery of the city

AN ACCOUNT

Of the Proceedings at GUILD-HALL, *London*,

At the

TOLKE-MOOT, or COMMON-HALL,

Held 24*th.* of June 1676.

Relating to the Cities Petitioning His Majesty for a new Parliament.

MR. COMMON SERGEANT,

IT seems a vain thing for this Court, to be serious about the choice of Magistrates and Officers, for the well Government of this City, except they first take care to remedy those many mischiefs and grievances which the City now groans under, and which seems so to threaten the ruine and destruction of the whole, that if there be not some speedy redress, there will be little need of Magistrates and Officers; for

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there will be no City or People left here to be governed.

London has once already been burned to aſhes, and firing is now become ſuch a Trade, that not only *London*, the Burrough of *Southwark*, and the Places adjoyning, but all the Cities, Burroughs, Towns Corporate, and Places of principal Trade throughout the whole Kingdom are perpetually in danger; ſo that no rational and conſiderate Man amongſt us, can promiſe himſelf, his Wife, his Children, or Eſtate, one night ſecurity, but they may all be devoured in the conſuming flames, except ſome ſpeedy and effectual courſe be taken.

But this is not all, for were our Houſes ſecure from Fire, yet ſuch is the general decay of Trade, as if not remedied, muſt inavoidably bring the whole City to poverty and ruine; and it is conceived that this is very much occaſioned by the French, who have laid ſuch great Impoſitions upon our woollen Cloth, Stuffs, and other Manufactures, that we have almoſt loſt our Trade with *France*, and they have ſpoiled our Trade with *Holland*, *Flanders*, and *Germany*, by a deſtructive War. They have ruined our Trade at home, and beggared many thouſand of our honeſt and induſtrious Weavers, and other Engliſh Manufactors and Traders, by the vaſt quantity of their Silks, and other unneceſſary Commodities imported hither. So that upon an exact Ballance of the Trade, between Us and them taken, it has been demonſtrated that this City and Kingdom doth loſe eleven hundred thouſand Pounds every year.

By means whereof, they who in Queen *Elizabeth*'s time might not be ſuffered to build Men of War, are now

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now grown ſo powerful at Sea as to be able to beat both Dutch and Spaniard, and have made themſelves in a manner ſole Maſters of the *Mediteranian* Sea. And they are grown ſo preſumptious, as daily to injure and affront our Engliſh Merchants, and ſometimes in His Majeſties own Ports. Their Privateers daily take our Merchant Ships, plunder others, ſtrip, impriſon, and torment our Sea-men, to the great diſcouragement of our Engliſh Navigation, and almoſt ruine of the Merchant.

I ſhall Inſtance but in one thing more, but that is worſe then all the reſt, that is the juſt apprehenſion that is upon the minds of good Men, of danger to His Majeſties Perſon, and the Proteſtant Religion.

I had not ſpoken this at this time and place, but having the honour to ſerve this City in Common Councel, I have endeavoured at ſeveral times to bring theſe things before that Court, but could not. In the end of the laſt Common Councel I did deſire my Lord Major, that a Common Councel might ſpeedily be held, to hear and conſider of a Petition about Trade, ſubſcribed by a great number of Citizens of good quality; and his Lordſhip did then promiſe that a Common Councel ſhould ſpeedily be held: But it is a good time ſince, and there hath been many Fires and Loſſes, but no Common Councel. Whereof, me thinks, it doth become the wiſdom and gravity of this great Court, not to admit of any longer delay in a matter wherein their *All* is concerned: And I do humbly move (and I conceive it is not only my ſenſe, but the ſenſe of the far greater part of this Court) that ſome Members of this Court may accompany the Sheriffs, and Mr. Common Sargeant, before we proceed to

any other matter, to wait upon my Lord Mayor and the Court of Aldermen, to deſire that a Common Councel might ſpeedily be held, humbly to Petition His Majeſty, that for the quieting and ſatisfying the minds of His liege People, and for the remedy of the many miſchiefs and grievances we now groan under, he would gratiouſly be pleaſed (according to the Statutes of the *4th.* and *36th.* of *Edw.* 3.) timely to call a *New Parliament.*

Scarcely were theſe words a *New Parliament* pronounced, but a very great number cryed out, Well moved, well moved; and though none ſpake up formally to the Sheriffs, yet ſeveral amongſt the multitude ſpake enough, to ſhew an high approbation of what had been ſaid, and no one word was ſpoken in contradiction: Which when the Common Sargeant ſaw, to prevent (as is conceived) others ſpeaking to the ſame matter, he ſpake to this purpoſe.

That what had been moved, ſeemed to be the general ſenſe of the whole Court, and ſince the Gentleman that made the motion was pleaſed to join him with the Sheriffs, and that he muſt offer his opinion in the matter: It was this, that it was not ſo proper to carry up that Meſſage before they did proceed to their Elections; as Firſt, To determine their Election, and then carry up an account of theſe and that together. But many in the Court did inſiſt upon the motion, and deſired a Meſſage might be ſent up immediately. Whereupon one of the Sheriffs ſpoke, and did acknowledge, that what had been ſaid by the Gentleman, that ſpake firſt was true; but that he was an old Citizen, and had long known Com-

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mon Halls, and he did believe that the proper work of the day was the Election of Officers, and therefore he did desire that the Court would proceed to that, and not to carry up the Message till after that was done. To which one replied, That according to his utmost understanding, that Court was one of the Ancientest, greatest, and most powerful Courts in the City; and although the Customary business of this day was the choice of Officers, yet that Court had cognizance of any thing whatever that did relate to the good of the City, and therefore it was conceived that nothing was more proper at that time than this, which concerned the preservation of the City from utter ruine.

Upon which the other Sheriff directing his discourse to the People said, that what the Gentleman had moved there, was true and not unknown to most of the People there present; but that he was of his Brothers opinion, that it was fit first to go on to the work of the day, and not to carry up that Message till after the Election. Many Persons being still dissatisfied, and calling for a present Message to be sent up. Thereupon the Gentleman who first moved the business desired, that since there seemed a difference touching the circumstance of time, made it his Request that they would proceed to Election, and carry up the Message with the Persons elected as the Sheriffs desired, to which the Common-Hall unanimously agreed.

Upon which, silence being made, the Common-Hall proceeded to Election of Sheriffs, and made their Election; And sent up an account thereof to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, by the Sheriffs and Common Sergeant, as is

usual

uſual in ſuch caſes. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen preſently came down, and took their Seats in the Court of Huſtings according to cuſtom; upon which the Common Sargeant came forth to the front of the Court, and declared the names of the Perſons elected, and immediately gave back. Thereupon the Common-Hall called out for an Anſwer to their Meſſage; upon which the Common Sargeant ſteping forward again, and in the preſence of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Sheriffs, ſaid that he had acquainted his Lordſhip and the Aldermen with their Requeſt. And that his Lordſhip has commanded him, to declare unto them that he would be ready to join with them, in that or any other thing for the good of the City: And with that the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, *&c.* left the Court of Huſtings—And diſmiſſed the Aſſembly.

To the Common-Hall of the City of *London*.

Fellow Citizens,

OUr deplorable caſe forceth theſe lines from me, as the danger of the Fathers life made the dumb Son ſpeak: Our City is in danger to be laid again into aſhes, and to become like *Sodom*; wicked Helliſh Inſtruments being hired (as ſome now in Goal have confeſſed) to fire our Houſes, no Man in City or Suburbs can promiſe himſelf ſafety for a night.

But if vigilance ſhould preſerve our Houſes, our City is in no leſs danger to be depopulated and become deſolate, its Inhabitants (through decay of Trade and increaſe of poverty) daily forſaking it, between three and four thouſand Houſes lying now deſolate. And its moſt wealthy Traders already refuſe to unite with the City, or to bear a part of, or be concerned in its Government, to ſupport the charge or burden neceſſary to preſerve ſo great a Body of Traders.

The Credit of our Merchants (which is like the daily food or life-blood of Traders) is ſo miſerably broken and loſt, that Forreigners have with-drawn their Stocks, truſted thereupon ſeveral Credits: And no Man knows where to lodge his Money in ſecurity; which muſt make a conſumption of all Trade, proportionable to the diminution of Credit.

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Our Merchants Ships paſs in no ſafety, through the potency of the French, who are now Aſpirers to the Dominion of the Seas, they take our Ships in ſight of our Harbours, under vain pretences, and detain them to clear them in their Admiralties, until the Merchants principles are half ſpent; the crews of Engliſh Sea-men (either by want, or miſeries) forced, or baſely ſeduced to ſerve them; to purchaſe (with our Engliſh bloods) the French Domination by Sea as well as by Land.

Our Sea-men on whom depends the greatneſs, ſafety, and being of our City, are by the former means and ſome other, not only loſt (in great numbers) to this City, and to *England* and our People decreaſed; but are (ignorantly as we will hope) the greateſt Enemies to our City and Kingdom, helping to put the King of *France* into poſſeſſion of Naval power, that our King can never hope to enjoy his ancient Rights of the Seas Dominion, unleſs by a vaſt expence of Engliſh blood and treaſure.

Our Artizans, ſuch as Weavers, broad and narrow, Taylors, Hat-makers, Braziers, Shoo-makers, Stockin-makers, with the Trades attendant reſpectively upon theſe, are ſo miſerably impoveriſhed by the encroachments of ſeveral kinds made by the French and others upon us, that their pinching wants have already endangered tumults and ſeditions among ſome of them; (and others have waited in vain with great expence) at the door of His Majeſties Councel, and of His Parliament when ſitting; and how great our danger is, that the poor Artizans hunger may break through our Brick-walls, God alone knows.

Our Native Manufactures and Commodities (the

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tranſport whereof ſhould ſupport the City as well as the Kingdom, are ſome forbidden by the French King, others loaden with inſupportable Impoſitions, ſo debaſed in price that our City and Kingdom, like conſuming Prodigals, ſpend in *France* ten times our Engliſh revenue or growth; and if it ſo continue, we muſt become the King of *France* his Slaves for his Gaieties; as the Egyptians, more excuſably, yielded themſelves to *Pharaoh* for bread.

But 'tis not only our Houſes, Trades, Liberties, and Lives, but our Proteſtant Religion; and therein the Souls of us and our Poſterity, are in eminent danger: The Papiſts amongſt us lift up their heads, and ſay their day is near; and the Monaſteries and Convents of Engliſh abroad, openly declare that they ſhall have their Ancient Church-lands and Convents here again, by the French King's aid. And the People are ſo frighted, that ſcarce any Man dares buy Church-lands; And thoſe (that ſay) they will run the Reſque, openly declare two years purchaſe abatement of the price of other Lands, becauſe of the danger of Popery returning.

And is there any more then the breath of Our King (which may paſs before morning) between that and us; If the preſumptive Heir of the Crown be a Roman Catholique, what ſecurity can be given that the King ſhall live eight or nine Moneths? And what ſafety is there provided for the Proteſtant Religion, if a Catholick ſhall poſſeſs the Crown? This being our ſad condition (judge I pray you) what can ſave this City, but Laws fitted by a Parliament to our caſe, in reſpect of every caſe and grievance. And may not our caſe, and the Kingdoms too,

be deſperate, if we ſhall wait eight or nine Moneths for the Parliaments meeting.

In the ſence of this, you were lately moved to deſire the Lord Mayor to call a Common Councel, to conſider of an humble Addreſs to His Majeſty, to call a New Parliament ſpeedily, according to the Statutes of the 4*th.* of *Edward* the 3*d.* and the 36*th.* of *Edward* the 3*d.* whereby a Parliament is to be holden at leaſt every year.

And the Parliament (laſt held) being ſo Prorogued, that it cannot be convened within a year, as the Statutes require.

I appeal to your conſciences, whether a more ſeaſonable and neceſſary motion was ever made? How could a Citizen conſult his Fellows (about preſervation and the redreſs of ſuch grievances) in a more proper place or time then in their greateſt Aſſembly, and Court of greateſt Power?

How could he move more modeſtly, then to deſire the debate of the matter might be had in their leſſer Aſſemblies?) their repreſentatives in Common Councel) how could he be more ſtudious of Peace, then to avoid the doing of any by that numerous Aſſembly, leaſt it might be tumultuous? what can be more innocent, then to pray that the Citizens authority ſhould ſhew their caſe to the King, and their thoughts of the means for their relief.

Yet ſuch is our miſeries that ſuch a harmleſs needfull motion, is now taken by ſome of the King's Councel to be ſeditious and tumultuous, and your Fellow Citizen, and one of your Common Councel, is made a Priſoner for it; Oh how ſad is our Cities caſe! if His Majeſty

jeſty do not rectifie ſpeedily a miſtake of dreadful conſequence.

Our Common-Hall is the great authority and power in our City, the chief binding Acts in our Cities Government have alwayes been made by the Common-Hall: And the Acts of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Councel, have been, and may be nulled by the Acts of the Common-Hall; You are inſtead of the whole Body of the Free-men of the City, to whom all our ancient Liberties and Cuſtomes have been confirmed by the great Charter, and by thirty or forty Acts of Parliament.

But if any of your number may be impriſoned, for mentioning the Cities grievances to you, or for moving for an Addreſs to be made by your Common Councel to the King according to Law, you are not more an Aſſembly of any Authority or any uſe.

Your ancient Liberty before the great Charter, and that alſo ſince, and all the Acts of Parliament are become void to you, and all your Members, if when you are Aſſembled you muſt be dumb, leaſt the uſe of your Liberty and Faithfulneſs ſend you to a Goal.

Was it ever heard of before, that a Member of a lawful Court or Aſſembly was impriſoned for making a lawful motion in it; for praying only that the King might be moved that the Statutes, concerning Parliaments might be put in Execution, when need ſo urgently requires it?

And if it be ſaid, that ſuch a motion was not the work of the day, being deſign'd to chuſe Officers, can any be deceived of their prime and greateſt liberty, to think that

leſſer Authority of the City can confine the greater and the higheſt, or to do nothing in their Aſſemblies but what the leſſer pleaſeth, that were to turn the Government of the City topſie turvie, and to make the power of the Common Hall inferior to the will of the Lord Mayor, yet in the preſent caſe leſs power was exerciſed then twelve of the Common Councel have frequently uſed, they having uſually demanded a Common Councel of the Lord Mayor, and this Common-Hall was only moved to pray it: And had the Aſſembly been only a Common meeting of Engliſh men, upon any occaſion whatever, might not any Man have lawfully diſcourſed, either the Cities or Countreys grievances and dangers among them? And ſhew his opinion, that nothing but a new Parliament ſpeedily called was likely to relieve them, and that it was fit humbly to addreſs to the King for it.

What can be more modeſt, innocent, and dutiful to His Majeſty? How can he know His Peoples grievances, or the need of a ſpeedy Parliament but by ſuch addreſſes? If ſuch motions are made criminal, the People are bar'd for ſeeking to His Majeſty, for relief from their great and in their moſt extream danger.

Even that Law made in the 13*th.* of this King, for preventing tumults and diſorders in petitioning, however were never reſtrained: Any Man, or number or Aſſembly of Men from petitioning, or ſoliciting others to petition for any thing agreeable to the Laws eſtabliſhed. But allows the Lord Mayor or Court of Common Councel of our City, to addreſs to His Majeſty againſt matter eſtabliſhed by Law, in Church or State, thought by them ſo to be grievances; how is it then poſſible that

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a motion ſhould be criminal, that a Common Councel ſhould addreſs for a Parliament, as the Law requires.

Know then my Fellow Citizens, if you the Common-Hall of this our City ſhall by your ſilence upon this occaſion, agree that your *Mem*bers may be lawfully impriſoned, for ſuch innocent, peaceable motions, you muſt bid Adiew not only to all your *Rights* and Liberties of your City, but to the common liberty of Engliſh men; you muſt and do ſeemingly bleſs thoſe breakers of the great Charter of Engliſh liberty, whom our Anceſtors ſo ſolemnly and dreadfully accurſed; you muſt bid fare-well to the happy ſecu rity of our Lives, Liberties, and Eſtates, by the Laws, whereby every man ought to be ſafe in his Perſon and Eſtate, unleſs he tranſgreſs the Law: And you muſt yield your ſelves ſubject to the wills of a few Courtiers, and be buried in Goals, or otherwiſe deſtroyed if you diſpleaſe them, though in praying for that which might be demanded as your right.

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Good Citizens, let me freely ſay this one word, if there had been no need of a Parliament to be preſently called before this ſtrange invaſion of all your City Liberties, and all Engliſh freedom, in the impriſoning one of your Members without Bail, for doing his duty in ſo great an Aſſembly, this alone were ſufficient reaſon for you, to addreſs to His *Majeſty* for a ſpeedy Parliament.

FINIS.